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them is to be attributed the introduction of the standing army, the funding system, and that superlatively wicked measure, the septennial act. In latter times, we have had several instances of their political depravity; and when out of place, they loaded the tax upon income with every epithet of abuse; its principle was impolitic, and immoral in its tendency, and that prudential considerations alone ought to prevent an open resistance to it. Yet

these very Whigs were no sooner in office, than they raised this tax from $6\frac{1}{2}$ to 10 per cent. They introduced the Chief Justice of the Court of King's Bench into the Cabinet; they gave Lord Grenville the situation of Auditor of the Exchequer, an office incompatible with his situation of First Lord of the Treasury; and they even attempted to introduce the Exciseman into your houses, if you brewed a drop of small beer.

MONTHLY RETROSPECT OF POLITICS.

NEVER, in the history of any country, has there happened such a deplorable depression of public spirit, as has taken place, since the year 1782; among the Protestant portion of the Irish community. However it may be accounted for, such is the melancholy fact. Political events are rarely reducible to single or simple causes; and this striking collapse of the public mind may be ascribed to a combination of causes. A state of languor in the political, as in the physical body, is apt to succeed an extraordinary, and, as we are now disposed to believe, an unnatural excitement. Our energies depended rather on extrinsic circumstances, such as the American revolution, than on a pure and disinterested love of liberty, implanted in our own hearts.—“*Virtus Sarmatarum*,” says Tacitus, “*est extra se*,” and such patriotism is seldom of permanent duration. The French revolution had an effect in changing the most fixed principles of men: much as the axis of the globe they inhabit, would have been altered in its direction by the impulsion of a comet; and, in consequence, every thing in Heaven, or on earth, since that period, seems to have been considered under a new position. From a temperate climate in politics, most

people have been suddenly thrown, by the tremendous shock, into a frigid zone of perfect apathy, and many, into a torrid zone of the most ardent and consuming intolerance.

Humanity is always acting under a passion, or a panic; and not a few are glad of a fair pretext, in the intemperance of the times, to forsake an old *profitless* principle, and to commence a course of more lucrative practice. This gradual, but very general secession among all ranks, but principally among professional men, has at first irritated, and at last disposed the constant friends of reform to a seclusion from politics, and an abandonment of all public concern. *Constitution* is the mantling word which, like charity, completely covers a multitude of sins, and all those who will not again be forced into desperate measures, are obliged to succumb in silence, which is soon succeeded by apathy: for public feelings, like all other feelings, decay and die, without being frequently exerted.

A rebellion instigated and forced upon a people, previously deserted by their natural leaders, and driven from the highest hopes to the depth of despair, terminated in a long swoon of all public feeling. During this *deliquium* of mind, our poor

country was thrown into the pit, or perhaps more properly spelled, *Pitt*-fall of an union, the elder brother grieving that "our sheaf stood upright, even in a dream," and reporting that we were devoured by the wild beasts of intestine discord, and incurable misunderstanding.

Here too, apathy was the consequence, and an exhaustion of public spirit, which we need only specify, among a number of other effects, in that single one, the expatriation of talent, and the new destination of superior minds, who now meditate upon pushing their fortune and fame, not *in* and *for* their own country, but, after some reluctant struggles, will, with swift gradation become completely anglicised in profession, in principle, in *passion*; entangled in English connexions; *implicated* in English contempt of our island; and circulating as the satellites of some wandering planet of English party. Astronomers have found that some stars of the first magnitude, decrease in lustre, and that some are totally extinguished, and lose their place in the heavens. It is even so with our lower luminaries; and to our speculation, the radiant *STAR* of 1782, has lost much of his original brightness, since he condescended to sit even in what is called the imperial senate. *Country* concentrates and invigorates that public spirit, which is diluted, and dissipated in an *external* assembly, or easily damped from want of sympathy, or drawn aside and deluded, to serve the purposes of Parliamentary leaders, or family interests, until, busied with these grand occupations, the little insignificant island is considered with an indifference approaching to apathy.

Were it not for one particular question, which, however important in itself, has certainly been made instrumental to the purposes of par-

ty, Ireland would, soon after the Union, have shrunk from all public consideration. Just in the same way as when individuals acquire great riches, and eminence, either professional, or personal, in their neighbourhood, they are immediately drawn from this their natural station of real usefulness and respectability, by the influence of the crown, and the attraction of a title: just in the same way has the Union operated on the native independence, and inherent dignity of our once dear country, which has been sunk and lost in its new title, naturally producing new attachments, and new objects of degenerate ambition. Public spirit in a country depends often upon the exertions and energies of a few *noble-minded* individuals, who are now in an honourable exile, and in a creeping oblivion of all that transported, exalted, and inspired their earlier days.

Lord Moira, for example, who was so well accustomed to exhibit his speech, and his shamrock, at the festival dinners of our tutelary saint, amidst the acclamations of his fervent audience; after disposing of every inch of ground in Ireland, on which a shamrock could grow, now accepts an appointment, which will withdraw him most opportunely from the consideration of the Catholic claims. The patronage of the Indian Empire will richly compensate for the loss of Irish popularity, and the salary of 30 or £40,000 per annum will well repay the services he performed, when he volunteered himself as the forlorn-hope of the Prince Regent. How happy will he feel himself in bidding adieu to all the *household* cares, and in being delivered from all heavy, heart-sinking responsibilities, with the billing sparrow of poetry, Tommy Moore, to perch upon his chair of state, in the luxurious leisure of an East-Indian

climate, (much more congenial to such songsters than that of North-America;) while a thousand other birds of passage are about to assemble under the same powerful protector, forgetting and forgotten, until a few return, with tarnished consciences, and broken constitutions, to purchase boroughs, and watch the beck of whomever may happen to be the minister of the day.

Another cause of the general apathy, lies in the war, with all its immense expenditure; and this allspreading military system, accompanied with a correspondent system of finance, has indisposed, and even incapacitated the public at large from any political exertion. The paper circulation has bound the whole population of the country to the government Firm; *implicating*, not merely the banks, national and local, but the whole mercantile, and the whole landed interests, and through them, indirectly, the rest of the community, thus induced by these paper bonds to connect their self-interest with the stability of the existing administration.

The discussion of the Catholic question has, in fact, suspended all other political consideration. The Protestants of Ireland, until lately, have been, in a great measure, standers by and lookers on; and are but now beginning to act, through the interest taken in the emancipation of their countrymen. National liberty is, in good truth, *national wealth*. The more extended the circulation of rights, the greater is the power of procuring equivalents, the stronger is the excitement to human labour in its infinite variety, the more rapid must become the exchanges of all sorts. Thus, in the result, the general product and accumulation will bear an exact proportion to the extent of employment, and this to the diffusion of *liberty*,

that is to say, of *power*, that is to say, of the means of acquiring an *equivalent*, that is to say, (however political economists may dispute about the wealth of nations,) the great, and greatly neglected mine of riches that lies beneath our feet, while we roam round the world for colonial produce, and exotic luxuries. The wealth of a country is locked up with its liberties; and the best and grandest *commercial* speculation, is the complete emancipation of the Catholics. The throwing open the trade of India is nothing to the throwing open the liberties of Ireland, and thus cultivating the universal capabilities of a country, so valued for its cattle and its corn, and so depreciated in the human creature.

In the general apathy, and sinking of public spirit, the Catholic question is almost the only symptom of vitality. It is the "*punctum saliens*" in the body politic, which indicates animation to be only suspended, and not for ever extinguished. Let the Catholics remember that they act under most weighty responsibility. They stand for Ireland: they speak for it: they act for it: they represent it. The Protestants of 1782 act only intermediately and indirectly, and are merely subsidiary to a cause which happily acquires energy by its concentration. Patriotism thus acts with all the strength and interest of domestic feelings.

But although the event of the present election be, in general, very honourable to the Catholics, in the exercise of that political power which they have already obtained, there have occurred several circumstances, and several cases, which plainly prove of *how little avail* Catholic emancipation itself, would be to the renovation of the constitution, (not the constitution made up of abuses, but the constitution built on the consent of the

whole kingdom in parliament assembled,) without that effectual REFORM which may establish a permanent and perennial relation between the constituent and representative body of the people. The putrid ferment would quickly spread through the Catholic mass, and private promises, and obligations, and evasions would soon obstruct the march of public duty. The man who makes anticipated engagements of his sacred elective privilege, is a traitor to the constitution, and commits a petty larceny upon the property of the public. But he excuses himself to his conscience by saying that he only does as others do; and the Catholic *will do*, as the Protestant *has done*. Without a reform in the Commons House, the Catholics will appear only to have wanted a share in the Slave-trade, and then will contribute their endeavours to uphold a monopoly still withheld from the people. Human nature will always fall "into temptation," until the English government be delivered from evil; from impure patronage, and corrupt practice, and, in short, from all those *abuses*, the accumulation of which goes by the name of our glorious constitution.

Whether the Catholics do rightly, or even favourably in the event to their own particular interest, by keeping their cause separate from that of reform, will admit of serious doubt. By incorporating Catholic emancipation with sentiments of Parliamentary reform, they would gain great popularity in England, and not lessen their power among the leaders of party. A short time will show, that they could not adopt a wiser measure, than to embody themselves with the great *national cause*; and when they find, *as they will do*, that their emancipation will not be granted, but on conditions, inconsistent with religious obligations, they will

then, perchance, find it necessary to unite with the true friends of the British constitution.

There is, at present, in Great Britain, and perhaps in Ireland, a scattered and uncombined public opinion, on the necessity of reform, which only waits for the period of peace to acquire an irresistible momentum. War will be protracted as long as possible, for political purposes, by those who have it now in their power, as it has been always their inclination, to treat all concerted pursuits of redress as treasonable conspiracy; and who, practicing all that ecclesiastical zeal of the ancient Papal tyranny they affect to reprobate, would employ the established government, solely, as a *political* inquisition. But the period of their power approaches, and the Roman Catholics of Ireland will find fresh obstacles thrown in their way, until that era arrives, which will firmly unite and consolidate the cause of emancipation with that of reform. Until then, there will take place a wretched scene of reciprocal compliment, political intrigue, and final delusion, and much is it to be feared, that the Catholic mass, will, in the mean time, be split and shattered by an influence which enters with the soft insinuation of water, and afterwards acts with the explosive force of the most powerful repulsion.

Let them not be persuaded to believe, that their emancipation, their rightful emancipation, is so near at hand, as a few may induce them to imagine. Why, on the same *appearances*, reform is also near at hand. "Painters, and other workmen, have been employed, night and day, (including Sunday,) since Sunday sennight, to complete the alterations and additions in the Houses of Parliament, and particularly in respect to the Royal entrance."

These certainly are *external* signs of reform; and not less numerous are the indications of Catholic emancipation: You were once most completely cheated in the year 1800; before twelve years have elapsed, will you be cheated again?—and by the very same man who cheated you before? The man whose name (however he may shift it,) will always be associated with the extinction of his country. Impassive as this man certainly is, by nature, to reproach either from without or from within, and whirled about, by profession and principle, in the constant rotation of ministerial office, he will proceed through life in the way he has done, serene and imperturbable, as if he presided at a feast; and on his death bed, in the quietness of a callous conscience, will be found still modelling himself after his great master. Even *there*, this modern Mazarin, adjusting himself to his vocation, will, with his last breath, exclaim, “Alas! my poor country!” It is not such minds that the calamities brought upon their country will *eer* appal. “*Impavidos ferient ruinæ.*” It must be a shallow and wavering disposition that could be shaken on the bed of death, by the groans of torture, or by the ghosts of Walcheren. Such men begin by deceiving others, and end in deceiving themselves. They emit a sort of marshy, meteorous light, which is denominated glory by those who live through their patronage; but truth, like Uriel in the Sun, will pursue them down the page of history, and reveal them, in their proper shape, to the transmitted contempt of successive generations.

On the 20th instant, a splendid public dinner was given to the Hon. Major-General Stewart, (at the same time presented with the freedom of the Corporation,) by the inhabitants

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of Belfast, for his eminent services in the Peninsula, and in testimony of the high sense entertained of his conduct as a soldier. This was certainly previously given out, both privately and publicly, as merely a compliment to a military character, for professional services; but as certainly, there was a reasonable apprehension, justified in a great degree by the event, that the entertainment would prove, in no little degree, accessory and ancillary to party and political purposes. On an apprehension of this kind, not a few absented themselves, and had one of that number happened to have been present, he would have felt himself compelled, when the name of Lord Castlereagh was announced as a toast, with a cheering of three times three, to have submitted, with great deference, to the most noble chairman, that the understood purpose of the meeting was to compliment a military man, the gallant General, for military services; that the toast given, in its obvious sense, was a toast of party politics; and that however hard it might be to separate personal from political character, he would most willingly strive to separate it, in the present instance, and to drink Lord Castlereagh as the brother of the Hon. General, the son of the venerable nobleman at his side, the nephew of Alexander Stewart, and the polite accomplished man, but by no manner of means, as one of the present ministers of Great Britain. And when the “Glorious memory” was announced, he would have felt himself constrained, by motives infinitely superior to the ceremonial of such a meeting, to express a hope, that the same noble chairman would accept of the only sense in which he could take that toast, most willing as he was to celebrate the memory of William III. as the glorious and

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immortal instrument of a great and greatly wanted revolution, as the defender of the rights and independence of Europe, against the despotic designs of Louis 14th, but by no means as the discourager of Irish commerce, and as conniving at the persecution of our Catholic countrymen. And in such interpretation, this individual firmly believes, he would have met at least the *tacit* assent and approbation of the majority of the persons who assembled at this very splendid entertainment, so well suited to the wealthy town of Belfast.

War is seldom, if ever, reducible to any certainty of calculation, (a reason, if any were wanting, for never recurring to it but in the extreme of necessity,) and we, this month, see the two heroes of their respective countries, with their armies in full retreat, and in equally perilous situations. Napoleon, who certainly circumvented his enemy, by directing his march, contrary to all expectation, to Moscow, has himself been defeated in his design of spending the winter in Russia, by the unforeseen conflagration and desolation of the capital. This event, and the retreat which followed in necessary consequence, will probably have an extraordinary effect in stimulating the universal exertion of the Russian people. This is an element (we mean the enthusiastic resistance of a whole people,) which has neither in this instance, nor in that of the Peninsula, entered into Bonaparte's calculation, and yet this power, indefinite in itself, sometimes insignificant, is, at other times, most mighty, and even irresistible. Alexander was like to lose his empire in a coup-de-main, but the protraction of the war will probably accomplish his safety, and the Russian fleet, to the number of between twenty and thirty, have, without occasion, sail-

ed to a British port, and added to the glut of the English navy.

After wasting the whole autumn, (through the want of sufficient means,) in the siege of Burgos, Lord Wellington is obliged to abandon it, unsubdued; to evacuate Madrid; and to concentrate his own and Sir Rowland Hill's armies for their joint protection. The advance of the French is in great and unexpected strength, in consequence of the re-inforcements sent from France, and it is to be feared that the General of the allied army must forthwith hazard another battle, or endeavour to regain the security of his lines at Lisbon. The purpose of Napoleon in protracting the war in the peninsula, in order to confine all the British disposable force in Portugal or Spain, while he contemplated a war against Russia, which he wished to attack without the aid of a British army; *this* purpose is accomplished; and therefore it is likely every exertion will now be made, on the part of the French, to put a speedy termination to the war on the peninsula. The Spaniards are most probably as weary of their friends as of their enemies; and it is observable that the French have, with great policy, flattered the religious prejudices of the Spanish nation. When they last left Madrid, they left it without any sacrilegious waste upon the churches and convents, and without any violation of private property. The altars, and shrines, and refectories, have still preserved their treasures in silver, plate, jewellery, and other adornment. In fact, the Spanish nation will fall off to the strongest military power; and unless it be kept always garrisoned with a powerful British army, there is little hope that the peninsula will long continue the faithful ally of Britain. If it be necessary to hold this peninsula as an outwork in the line of defence

of the British Empire, the ministers ought to have poured in their succours to support the victory at Salamanca, while Bonaparte himself was on his Russian career ; but it is probable that his retreat from Russia will lead him more anxiously to secure success in Spain, either by fresh detachment of forces, or by his own presence to close the campaign. It will certainly puzzle posterity, when they read of France and England carrying on war against each other, the first at Moscow in Russia, and the last at Burgos in Spain.

The present gloomy appearances in Spain are attempted to be contrasted by ministers, and their adherents, with the reverses in Russia. Some are cautious of giving implicit confidence to Russian bulletins, after Lord Cathcart's sample of credulity, and from the habitual necessary distrust of ministers, are cautious of believing all they say. On the ministers dining with the new Lord Mayor in London, Lords Liverpool and Castlereagh flourished away, after their manner, respecting a *perpetual* friendship with Russia. They, who recollect how often Paul, or his almost equally versatile son, Alexander, has been in turns our magnanimous *ally*, or directly at war with us, cannot refrain from smiling at this unmeaning cant: they will learn to understand the meaning of Russian, and ministerial professions of eternal friendship, both being deceitful and hypocritical !

But without relying on ministerial accounts, the French bulletins, and the laboured attempts to palliate defeats in the minor French papers, discover that things do not go on well with Napoleon in Russia. The fulsome address of the Senate, and the theatrical tears of the Empress on receiving it, appear to cover a pretext, that he may remove from the perilous scene with less diminu-

tion to his honour. His anger also against the Russians affords another reason to suppose he finds himself disappointed, when, contrary to the laws and usages of war, he had 10 Russians executed, and 16 more imprisoned, for burning Moscow, an act, which, as that city belonged to Russia, did not come within the verge of his legitimate interference.

Without indulging in too sanguine expectations, as some courtly editors already step forward to do, whose prognostications events may disappoint, it may be allowed to the friends of liberty to feel no regret at the prospect of the failure of a despot, or that a despot should fall by the hands of despots. At least the desire is not blamable, to wish to see a change, however from past events doubts may hang over the future ; and to entertain a hope that if he fall, a restoration to liberty, but not of the miserable feeble Bourbons, may succeed. If a second tragedy is again to be acted at Quiberon, by erecting the standard of the Bourbons, ministers should recollect the fatal failure of Pitt's scheme on the same spot.

The revolution in South America is at present over clouded. The friends of independence for a season are forced to succumb to the friends of Old Spain, and her governors. The revolutionists have to contend against the gross ignorance and superstition of the people, who are the slaves and dupes of the lowest prejudices. The Carraccas, for example, had been erected into the independent republic of Venezuela, by General Miranda, but an earthquake having desolated some of those provinces, the priests seized on the circumstance, described it as a visitation of Heaven on republicans and revolutionists ; and so general a defection took place, that Mi-

landa has been taken prisoner, and the republic of Venezuela is perhaps no more ! The same ignorance and influence enslaved Mexico, Peru, Chili, and Buenos-Ayres, notwithstanding partial insurrections, and the shedding of much blood, at the different places of partial insurrection. Yet with all these discouraging prospects, the bright hopes of South American independence must not be too hastily relinquished in despair. Let the friends to universal freedom trust to the slow, apparently tardy, but sure progress of reason, overcoming all the obstacles of prejudice, corruption, and self interest.

The Anti-Catholic petition is industriously handed about for signatures. In some places, at Armagh, and Lambeg, and probably in other parts, if the fact happened to come under observation, pains are industriously taken to procure the signatures, even of children at school. In some places also threats have been used to compel signatures. Names may thus be multiplied ; but such conduct is very different from the care taken last year to procure only respectable signatures to the petition in favour of Catholic emancipation ; and to prove that no unfair practices were used, correct lists of the signatures obtained in some places were published in our pages. We dare the promoters of the present petition to a similar 'fairness' of proceeding, and call on them to publish the names they obtain, without, however, expecting they will comply with the fair proposal : for intolerance shrinks from the open face of day, and delights in acts of secrecy. We trust, however, the subject will be investigated, when the petitions are presented.

The present times are not favourable to virtue, nor to those high exertions, which virtue only can call forth. The age is peculiarly selfish,

to so great a degree, as to leave little room to the philanthropist to hope to see a better era. It is impossible to cherish hope, while corruption stalks so undauntedly abroad, with shameless and impudent front, and till sounder notions prevail, a change of one system of corruption and venality for another, would not be likely to better our condition. Thus, whichever way we look, the prospect is dreary and cheerless. A higher-toned system of morality, to operate both on public and private life, is wanting.* The knaves of all

* A writer in a contemporary periodical publication, speaking of the injurious effects of war on morals, makes the following judicious observations :—

"Governments, generally, by their operations, add to the vitiating effects of war upon the character of the people. They industriously work upon their minds, to keep them in good humour with the war. This is done by praising every thing warlike, which has the tacit effect of discrediting what is opposite to warlike. It is done, too, by perpetual railing against the enemy ; by ascribing to him every bad and hateful quality ; by describing him as weak and contemptible, and every moment ready to be overcome. It is done, likewise, by boasting extravagantly of the nation's own qualities ; ascribing to it the highest virtues, copious resources, invincible strength, which cannot fail, in a little time, of reducing the enemy to its mercy. When operations take place, every thing that is successful on the part of the enemy, is denied to be success ; if possible it is represented to be disaster ; and where that is not possible, the case is represented to be as bad for him as the utmost stretch of credulity is supposed to be capable of reaching. On the part of the nation itself, every operation which is not a defeat is represented as a victory ; a disaster is a check ; a shameful flight is a retrograde movement, which prudence has dictated as the forerunner of a tremendous blow. Time always discovers the fallacy of these representations ; and the people learn, that events very imperfectly correspond with the words of their rulers. In the mean time, they are habituated to boasting

classes in one general potent confederacy rule, and this world appears, according to the present perverted state of things, "to be made for Cæsar." It is astonishing and afflicting, to behold how knaves, by means of their powerful confederacy, and by the sympathy with each other in their various classes, contrive to keep each other in countenance. Men suddenly raised to eminence, intent only on the arts of rising still higher, become lenient to crimes, sometimes perhaps from certain recollections of their own conduct, in practising the arts of rising.

If we do not individually cherish in our breasts a high sense of honour, as the constant rule of action, and guide through life, we slide into a false tenderness, which inclines to pardon a departure in others from the strict line of right, and thus the standard of a correct morality is lowered in general, and a debased system comes to be the rule for conduct. Degeneracy spreads, and threatens to involve all honour and honesty in one common ruin, and, like an overwhelming torrent, sweeps every thing before its force. This is the progress of luxury, and thus the fall of nations is accelerated.

So have fallen the states of ancient renown, and so will modern nations fall, if the people of whom they are composed, fail in the essential qualities which confer stability on states.

and mendacity. The vice of lying is taught them, and taught them most impressively, by the highest example, and the highest authority. No vice more deeply taints the character than mendacity. Under the shape of a cloak, it acts as an inducement and a temptation to every vice, and to every crime. Dishonesty in words, among the common people, is seldom far distant from dishonesty in actions. A habit of insincerity, of irregularity of mind in regard to truth and falsehood, in a man of that class, is seldom found con-

The following letter came after the pages of this Magazine were mostly set, but it is inserted, though with some inconvenience.

To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.

AN Anti-Catholic Petition has been lately set on foot in the County of Down. I looked with some anxiety to the success of its progress; because I know the just influence the recorded sentiments of this County must have in Ireland, and in England. The result has been glorious indeed. If the public mind had ever wavered on the subject of Down liberality, the late impotent efforts to promote an intolerant measure, must have for ever set the question at rest. It may seem strange, why these strictly loyal Protestants, these tremblers for the Ark of the Church, did not summon an Aggregate assembly of the true Blues, to cry out against this dangerous measure of Catholic concession?—Why they did not collect all their force, and openly and honestly enter their protest? But, alas! THE GOOD OLD CAUSE has fallen into decline in this degenerate county:—and as if the GLORIOUS AND IMMORTAL MEMORY itself were forgotten. Men are now ashamed, actually ashamed to raise their loyal voice in defence of their King and Constitution.

nected with that regularity and steadiness of mind, which persevering industry and frugality, the virtues of his station indispen- sibly require. War, therefore, by habituating the people to the example of falsehood, on the largest and most operative scale, has a powerful tendency to engender in them a mendacious propensity, and to lay a foundation of all worthlessness of character, with which mendacity is seldom unattended. This is another of the ways in which war operates with a very mischievous force upon the moral character of the great body of the people."

The writer might have added, that a state of long protracted warfare is not less injurious to the morals of the rich. Their sycophancy and subserviency to those they consider as superiors, and by whom their selfish interests are aided, are fully as glaring as those of the poor. The vices of the rich and the poor differ only in accidental circumstances. Taking both classes aggregately, they are equally debased in moral integrity.